Audio Description Tutorial

This presentation will focus on how to create creative audio descriptions and why they are important!

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Audio Description

- Audio description (also referred to as "description" or "video description") is defined as "the verbal depiction of key visual elements in media and live productions." Audio description provides information on visual content considered essential to the comprehension of the program, in the same way that captioning provides information on essential audio content for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

- In the US, audio description falls under many of the same accessibility laws that require closed captioning for video. This includes the 21st Century Video Accessibility Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Sections of the Rehabilitation Act.

Overview of Audio Description Tools & Creation

- **To create audio description, you will need a mic, video editing software, and patience!**

- **Step 1: Audio Description Script Creation**
  - Watch the film and craft a detailed audio description script for each scene, focusing on character actions and surroundings without interrupting dialogue flow. Emphasize character actions, attitudes, and surroundings creatively.

- **Step 2: Script Review**
  - Read over the audio description script while reviewing scenes to check for timing, wordiness, and detail. Ensure a natural flow and avoid overlapping with dialogue.

- **Step 3: Recording**
  - Use a decent-quality mic for professional sound. Record each scene separately, speaking clearly and distinctly to paint a vivid picture for visually impaired viewers.

- **Step 4: Final Editing & Export**
  - Balance audio description with original film sound. Save both versions of the film and export to the desired location. Enjoy your film!

What To Describe

- **The script should be separated by each scene, with meticulous attention to details and actions of the characters.**
  - You want to clearly describe the actions of the characters without interrupting any of the dialogue or flow of the film.

  - Make sure to emphasize who you are speaking about and what their actions, surroundings, and attitudes are. Be creative with your descriptions.

- **Speak clearly and firmly, you want to be easily understood and clear with your speech.**

  - Remember, you are painting a picture for someone who has visual impairment.

Do It Yourself! (D.I.Y)

If it's not possible to describe visual information within the script or audio, then you'll need to add narration of the visual-only elements, actions, or on-screen text. Some tips for adding AD:
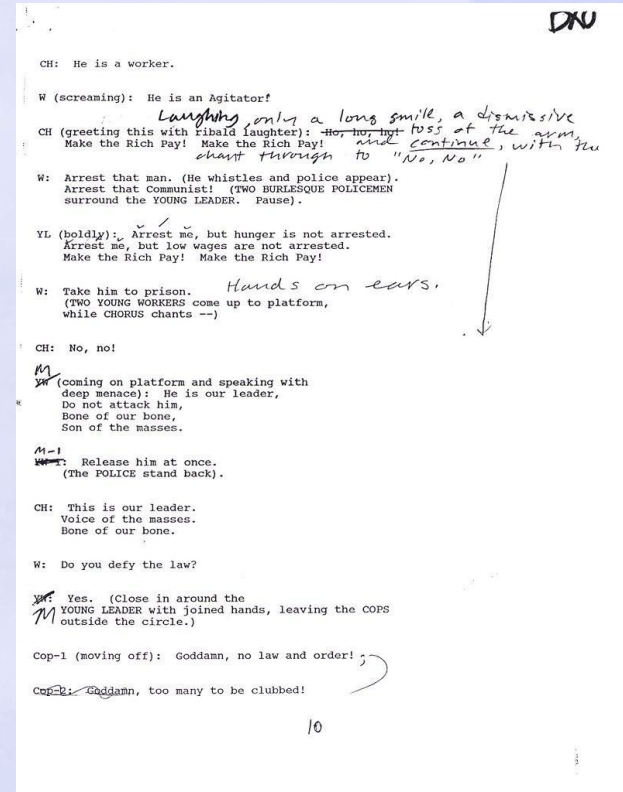
- Explain the visual information only to the extent necessary for viewers to understand. Focus on describing what is *seen*, and not what is *unseen*, such as motivations or intentions. The job of the describer is to describe what is physically observable, not to provide the listener with personal assumptions or conclusions.
- You don't need to describe content which is meant to be decorative.
- Close your eyes and listen to your video. What information is missing?

Standard Audio

Narration in between natural pauses in the dialogue of the original content.

Extended Audio

Narration not limited to natural pauses. Allows listeners to pause content to make room for additional descriptions.

Real-Time Audio

Live commentary or narration via headphones. Typically in theatrical performances and in-person tours.

Activity: Creating Audio Description!

Step 1: Write A Script!

- **Break into groups of at least 3 (1 photographer, 2 actors) and construct a scene containing the following:**

- **Criteria For The Scene:**
  - Shoot 3 to 5 shots
  - at least one shot containing dialogue
  - at least one shot containing non-verbal action
  - at least one shot containing facial expression that showcases an emotion

Example Script…

A man enters a room, closes the door

The man takes off his coat

Person A: "Want me to get started on dinner?"

Person B: "Sure, but first I need to tell you something."

Shot 1

Person A goes to cabinets, shuffles around for stuff

Person B: "You're cheating on me, aren't you?"

Person A: (looking shocked) I was really hoping you were going to tell me 'how to make dinner' but I guess accusations are just as good."

Shot 2

Person B, looking angry, shakes phone in the air: "I mean look at this! Look! Look at all these messages with these… these other men!"

Person A: Confused, walks over to look at phone "What are you talking about"

Shot 3

Person B: "Who the Heck is team Snapchat?? And how come they keep sending you "alerts" is that some secret hookup code word?

Person A: Are you crazy?? *throws hands up in the air*

Shot 4

Person B: I was crazy to think a man like you could ever be loyal to me. *woman storms out of the room and slams the door in a huff*

Shot 5
Person A: looks at the door, then the camera "everyone knows I'm more of an Alexa guy…"

Step 2: Shoot Scenes!

- **Shoot your footage with your groups**

  - if you are shooting with audio description in mind, take note of where it would work best.

  - When complete, review footage and look for visual cues

  - Make sure to write a script that you have fun recording, it will make the process more enjoyable

Step 3: Create Audio Description Script

- **Edit your script according to how your footage turned out!**
  - Watch your film and breakdown each scene
- **Make sure to cover facial expressions, actions visual cues and any other important details.**
  - Capture the mood of the scene.

- **Look for redundancies in your script to make the audio description lines as short and direct as possible.**
  - However this does not mean to shy away from creative and descriptive language.

- **Find the natural pauses in your scene**

Audio Description Script
Shot 1
A man enters a room closing the door behind him, revealing another man sitting at a table

Shot 2
the first man empties his pockets on a side table

the first man turns toward his accuser looking confused

Shot 3

They stand face to face

shot 4
the second man kicks a chair in frustration as he storms out

slamming the door behind him
Shot 5
Our view pans to the first man, looking exasperated in the center of the room

The camera focuses on the screen of the iPhone the man emptied from his pocket. The screen shows an interaction with the "Alexa" app
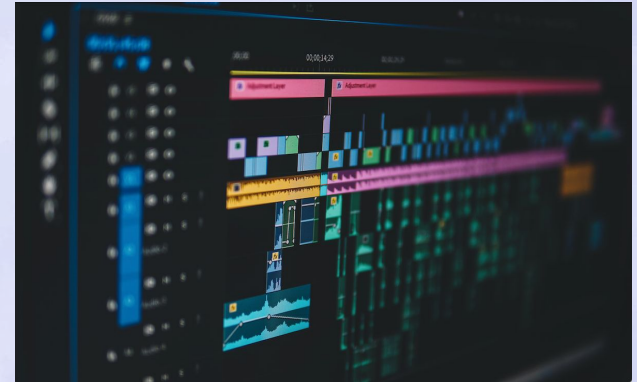
the text reads
"user: will you marry me"
"Alexa: Thank you, but I made a promise to myself that I won't get married until Mars is colonized"

Fade to black

Step 4: Record And Review

- **Record your audio description and integrate into project.**

- **Review by viewing the scene with your eyes closed!**
  - Edits should be completed where the audio description does not flow cohesively.

- **Exchange scenes with other group.**
  - Have other groups watch scene without sight to offer feedback.

- **Save and export two versions of the film. One with audio description and without!**
  - Watch and enjoy your film.

Thank You!